

By DREW A. BENNETT

Getting to the battle ready to fight is half of the operational challenge. Unfortunately this is an area in which joint doctrine is designed for the last war, not the next. We must reevaluate how to mass the effects of combat power in a theater to fight and win a future major regional conflict. Warfare has evolved from deploying massed troops and enveloping an enemy on the tactical level to moving troops and equipment into theater on the strategic level. Current doctrine has not gotten beyond the Gulf War experience and assumes a benign environment which may not always exist.

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A Scenario for Disaster

The nation of Outlandia knew that it was no match for the conventional military power of the United States. Its strategy was to grab as much of neighboring Inlandia as quickly as possible while delaying an inevitable build-up of U.S. forces in the area. Instead of pitting their tanks, ships, and aircraft against the enemy, Outlandese leaders planned to employ asymmetric means to inflict heavy damage on the Americans before they were ready to fight. The objective of Outlandia was not to win a decisive battle but to throw U.S. forces into disarray, buying time while influencing American public opinion. The Outlandese would not attempt to prevail on the battlefield but rather at the negotiating table with a better bargaining position.

They started with terrorist attacks on Inlandian airports and seaports. As the enemy massed

its troops on the disputed border, terrorist bombs damaged every airport. One bomb sank a tanker in the middle of the narrow channel leading to Inlandia's best harbor. The Outlandese main attack advanced despite U.S. efforts to stop them with airpower, and within a week Inlandia lost half of its homeland. American amphibious and airborne forces helped Inlandia establish a defensive line, then waited for the arrival of the U.S. heavy divisions necessary for an offensive.

Commentators and media sages pointed to the many similarities with the Persian Gulf War. Victory "on the cheap" seemed inevitable. Then the casualties began to mount. Within three days Outlandese commandos blew up two 747s and a C-5 carrying over a thousand American troops as they landed with their equipment on supposedly secure airfields in southern Inlandia. Outlandese insertion teams had actually reconnoitered targeted airports before the war and practiced on mock-ups of the facilities in Outlandia using media coverage of arriving flights.

What Could Happen

Things fared no better at sea. Although U.S. ships destroyed 25 Outlandese midget subs, one slipped into a port where *Buffalo Soldier*, an Army prepositioned afloat ship, was underway. A well

placed torpedo sank the vessel with its desperately needed tanks and supplies at a choke point blocking the harbor. Before the United States could deploy Patriot missiles, Scud 3s with far more accuracy than anything encountered during

Desert Storm found troop concentrations awaiting supplies and equipment undergoing maintenance preparations in staging areas adjacent to airfields and seaports. Two months and 6,000 lives later, after U.S. and allied security forces, air, and missile defenses had neutralized the Outlandese threat, lines of communication were restored as American forces resumed deployment to Inlandia.

Then Outlandian representatives sued for peace at the United Nations, claiming that their longstanding territorial dispute with Inlandia could be resolved through negotiations. The Outlandese agreed to return 75 percent of the seized territory if they could retain the balance of the contested area which bordered their homeland and contained one of the richest oil fields in the world. After bitter debate, Washington garnered sufficient international support to persuade the U.N. to refuse. U.S. aircraft, unable to regain the lost territory, did inflict horrible losses on enemy forces. While the American troops suffered and the original time-phased force and deployment

data (TPFDD) list was useless, the build-up had not been stopped. Realizing that they could not hold on indefinitely, Outlandese forces unleashed chemical and biological weapons. Relying on unconventional warfare teams and terrorists Outlandia detonated them on airfields and in ports used by the United States. Some soldiers and arms had been staged before the war began, based on the Outlandian analysis of where the Americans would most likely enter. While casualties were heavy, television coverage was much worse. Pundits became worried, faltered, and turned gloomy as public support eroded. The staff of the warfighting CINC blamed U.S. Transportation Command which, in turn, blamed the services. And the services blamed each other.

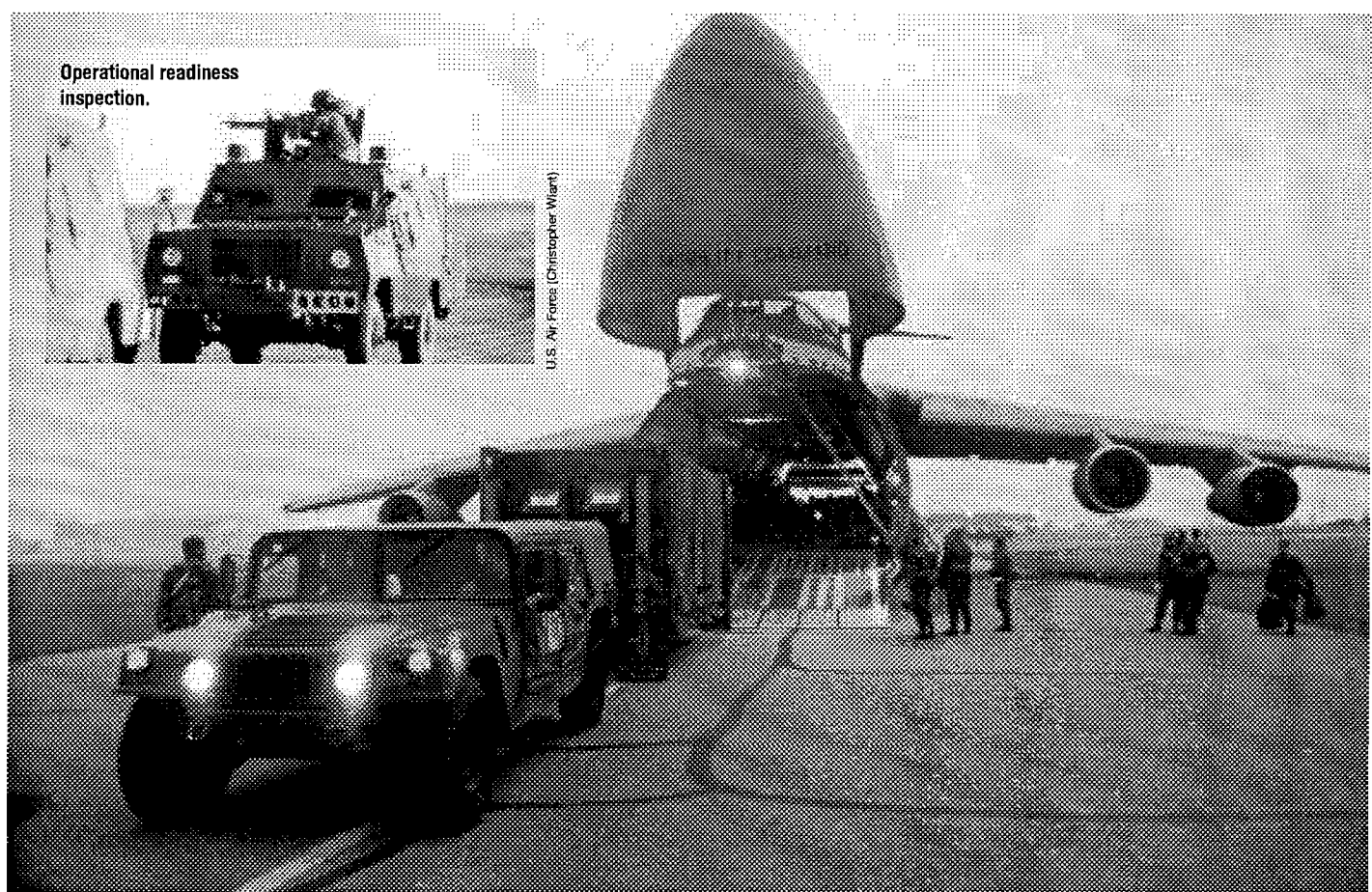
The experts estimated it would be six months before the United States and its allies could go on the offensive. Although some advocated nuclear retaliation, Outlandia returned to the United Nations to again sue for peace. All they wanted was the land—and the oil beneath it—they claimed was rightfully theirs.

This scenario is based on what could happen if our doctrine remains stagnant. Historically, as technology has increased the effectiveness of enemy firepower, military leaders have searched for solutions to the problem of getting to the battle ready to fight. Those who failed to progress were the losers. As range, accuracy, and rate of fire increased, so did the difficulty of arriving at the battle ready to attack.

Sequenced More Than Synchronized

On the tactical level, Frederick the Great achieved success at the Battle of Leuthen through use of iron discipline and precision drill, which allowed the Prussian army to stay massed and still envelop its enemy. Napoleon's armies had grown so large that they were organized into corps and marched along parallel routes and then massed just prior to the battle as they had at Jena/Auerstadt. Eventually the practice of conducting a flanking attack in sight of one's enemy became impractical. On the operational level, Moltke the Elder constructed the campaign for the Battle of Koniggratz so that Prussian forces concentrated at the point of battle, massing and enveloping simultaneously. By the 1900s the size of armies and the range of weapons expanded the scale of the problem since the enemy front could extend for hundreds of miles. Used as the basis for initial operations by the Germans at the outset of World War I, the Schlieffen plan of a wide envelopment by five armies swinging through Belgium and into France attempted a solution at the strategic level.

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Unloading C-5,
Crisis Reach 95-02.

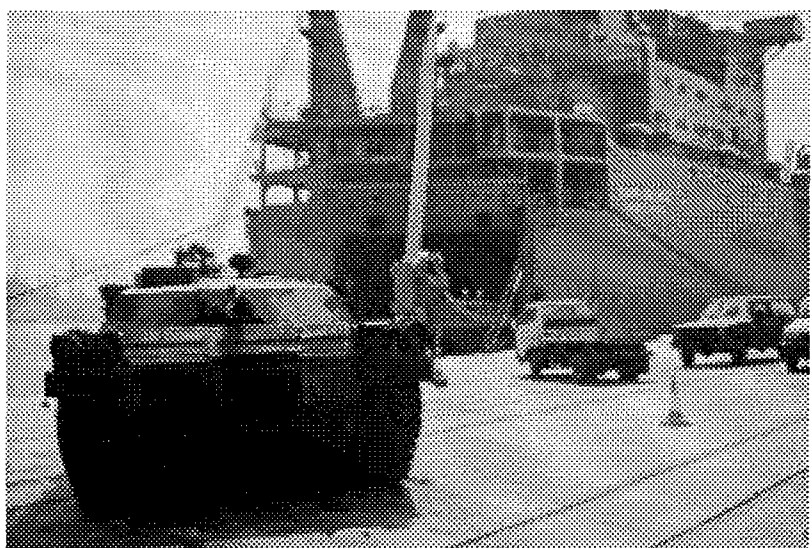
By World War II the problem had increased in difficulty by several orders of magnitude as warfare became three dimensional. After devastating losses the Allies organized a system of air-sea coordination and anti-submarine hunter-killer groups to protect convoys from threats above and under the sea to get to the fight in two theaters. During the Korean War MacArthur turned defeat into victory with the amphibious assault at Inchon which landed joint forces, cutting enemy lines of communication and support. Finally, in Desert Shield/Desert Storm U.S. doctrine and capabilities had advanced to a point where in six months half a million troops and ten million short tons of fuel and cargo could be moved halfway around the world.

Unfortunately, doctrine has not evolved significantly since. To get to the battle we rely on moving forces into theater through secure air and seaports of debarkation (APOD/SPOD) according to TPFDD. Initially security may be limited and most deploying forces will not be ready to fight. We must stage them, marry them up, and ensure they are "logistically mature" and "operationally ready" before conducting a major campaign.¹ In

getting to the fight troops are sequenced far more than synchronized and arrive administratively as independent units rather than as an integrated joint force organized for combat.

No Safe Haven

Potential enemies will study Schwarzkopf as well as Frederick the Great, and the Gulf War as well as the Silesian War. "Next time we may not be surrounded by allies, have six months of preparations time to project our power ashore under ideal conditions, and then fight a short conflict with limited casualties while controlling the skies."² Even if there is a friendly country in the area such as Saudi Arabia or a host country that expects us like South Korea, enemies will do anything to disrupt or prevent the introduction and build-up of U.S. forces in theater. We will be vulnerable to visibility and the tyranny of time as international news media report the slow assembly of forces through known APODs and SPODs.



Loading tanks on board *USNS Cuato*.

U.S. Army (Robert Elliott)

Evolving tactics and technology make it easier for an enemy to start fighting before we are ready. Unfortunately, these increased threats come at a time when reduced overseas presence, due to downsizing and the loss of overseas bases, only increases the complexity of getting to the battle. These threats make the idea of a benign airfield or port—a safe haven—obsolete.

Unconventional warfare. Countries with large and small militaries are keenly aware of the significant damage that special operations assets can inflict on high value targets. One example is

North Korea which has 88,000 unconventional warfare personnel, 280 AN-2 aircraft able to evade radar while inserting teams, and the largest mini-submarine fleet in the world. These assets present a formidable threat to any lengthy U.S. build-up through known air and sea

ports on the Korean peninsula.³ Even countries that do not spend 26 percent of their GDP on defense, as does North Korea, understand the potential benefit of such capabilities. For the price of training and equipping a few teams a country can inflict heavy damage on an enemy by shutting down an air or seaport, destroying enormous amounts of valuable equipment, and causing heavy casualties.

Terrorism. Countries that wish to conceal their involvement, as well as non-state entities without an organized military, can use terrorism to gravely hamper efforts to introduce forces into theater. The terrorist bombing of the Marine bar-

racks in Beirut led the United States to pull out of the multinational peacekeeping effort in Lebanon. Bombings of the World Trade Center towers in New York and Federal Building in Oklahoma City created shock waves at home. Such acts during a build-up could severely test national will and divert public attention.

Missiles. The proliferation of precision guided missiles (PGMs) is a continuing threat as their range and accuracy improve. The number of states with ballistic missiles is expected to rise from 15 to 20 by the year 2000. Some 77 have cruise missiles.⁴ When an enemy has the option of using such weapons or standing by and watching U.S. forces move uninterrupted into theater, there will be tremendous pressure to launch or lose PGMs.⁵ In that environment the attacker only needs to get lucky once or twice while the defender must be perfect every time.

Weapons of mass destruction. Despite American efforts, the threat of the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons is growing. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the security of nuclear weapons in Eastern Europe—once assured—has become uncertain. With the Gulf War against Iraq it became clear that weapons of mass destruction were not limited to major powers. The Japanese cult group Aum Shin Rikyo manufactured the chemical compound sarin and wreaked havoc in the Tokyo underground. Investigations revealed that they were also attempting to acquire a biological weapon. Any state with access to a pharmaceutical industry, moderately sophisticated university, or specialist research laboratory can produce either chemical or biological capabilities.⁶ In time such weaponry could be delivered by unconventional warfare teams, terrorists, or PGMs to halt the TPFDD flow through any APOD or SPOD.⁷

Counterstrokes

There is a need for joint tactics, techniques, and procedures (JTTP) to support a doctrine of rapid, seamless, and relatively invisible introduction of combat ready forces into theater. If we are willing to break out of a culture that demands a 12,000 foot runway, a deep water port, and secure staging areas, there are several concepts worth considering.

Stealth. Available stealth technology is dedicated to protecting a finite number of bombers from detection. We must expand this concept to include defense of air and sealift platforms from radar and satellite observation. In the past deployments have been publicized to deter. The future may require concealing the introduction of forces as a survival measure. The Royal Swedish Navy is already taking the lead and plans to build eight stealth warships over this decade.⁸

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Security. The vast majority of our equipment will get to the next fight by sea. As a result of Desert Storm, each service now maintains equipment on prepositioned ships.⁹ Unfortunately, these ships are unarmed, usually unescorted, and highly visible. They are susceptible to detection and preemptive terrorist attacks on PGMs at the start of hostilities and as they approach the SPOD. We should regard sealift ships as combatants and provide them with means for self defense.

Ready on arrival. The Joint Staff should take advantage of Marine doctrine on amphibious operations. Ships are loaded to facilitate the offloading of troops and equipment as self supporting units ready to fight. This concept should be incorporated in moving all U.S. forces into theater. TPFDD lists and transports must be redesigned accordingly. M1-A2 tanks that roll off aircraft or ships should be topped off with fuel, loaded with ordnance, and manned. Maintenance and vehicle preps need to take place en route by teams that will use them in order to preclude the necessity for staging areas that present lucrative targets.

Just-in-time marshaling. Japanese auto makers mastered the art of just-in-time delivery of auto parts to minimize storage costs. Applying this approach to introducing forces into theater will save lives as well as money. Troops should be able to walk off transport aircraft as trucks loaded with their unit equipment are driving off transport ships.

Expeditionary introduction. Introducing forces into theater today depends on cumbersome transports that require major airports and seaports. These facilities must be located within a certain distance of each other and are provided by a host country or taken at great cost from an enemy who then can anticipate and target where we will enter the theater. We must develop the capability to rapidly establish expeditionary APODs and SPODs where we choose and operate with a generation of expeditionary air and sea transports. This is not a new concept. During World War II aircraft in the Pacific landed on airfields built by Seabees before the battle was over. The Allies developed floating jetties to support the Normandy invasion. The C-130 was designed for short dirt strips and landing ships could beach and discharge cargo over a causeway it carried. Heavy airlift with a vertical short takeoff and landing capability and cargo ships with an air cushioned capability would revolutionize the way forces are introduced into theater.

Scenario for Victory

Although Outlandia attacked first, it was the only time they held the initiative. U.S. forces began to stream into Inlandia at an extraordinary rate from expeditionary APODs and SPODs along

the coast. A new generation of air and sea transports evaded detection and were quickly offloaded. Though most brigades were still not designed to conduct a forced entry, they were organized to be much more combat ready. They offloaded at night and as a result of just-in-time marshaling were consolidated into a fighting division and sent off to the front within two days. The introduction of forces had become part of the warfighting plan and no longer resembled a travel agent's timetable. The Outlandese soon discovered empty PODs, which obliged their unconventional warfare teams, terrorists, and PGMs to look for other targets. Outlandia did not have the luxury of disrupting the flow of U.S. forces because it was occupied protecting its flank from a counteroffensive.

This is truly a joint problem. It will not be solved by one service or U.S. Transportation Command alone. The issue of moving troops and equipment into theater should be considered in conjunction with the joint monthly readiness review, the joint warfighting capabilities assessment, and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. Doctrine must be focused on deploying capabilities militarily and evolve beyond the current ability to move forces commercially. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ In December 1990 LTG Calvin A.H. Waller, USA, Deputy CINCCENT, stated that the United States was not ready to conduct an offensive. See Russell Watson, "Fire When Ready," *Newsweek*, vol. 66, no. 27 (December 31, 1990), pp. 20-21, and Lisa Beyer, "Are We Ready to Wage War?" *Time*, vol. 136, no. 28 (December 31, 1990), pp. 26-27.

² Drew A. Bennett, "Will the Next War Be Like the Last One?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, vol. 76, no. 3 (March 1992), p. 39.

³ *The Military Balance 1995-1996* (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996), p. 184.

⁴ "Theater Missile Defense: Rising to the Challenge," *International Defense Review*, vol. 28 (August 1995), p. 26.

⁵ Also see Ronald R. Fogleman's assessment of missile threats to airfields and ports found in "Theater Ballistic Missile Defense," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 9 (Autumn 1995), p. 75.

⁶ Richard J. Danzig, "Biological Warfare: A Nation at Risk—A Time to Act," *Strategic Forum* 58 (Washington: National Defense University, January 1996), pp. 1-4.

⁷ John G. Roos, "The Ultimate Nightmare," *Armed Forces Journal*, vol. 133, no. 3 (October 1995), pp. 67-73.

⁸ Bruce Linder, "Sea Shadow," *Proceedings*, vol. 120, no. 1 (January 1994), p. 72.

⁹ For a detailed discussion see John M. Collins, "Prepositioning: Getting There First'est with the Most'est," *Proceedings*, vol. 122, no. 1 (January 1996), pp. 72-75.

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